

Wilson (D.) Bishop of
The True Christian Method of Educating
CHILDREN:

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of
ST. SEPULCHRE,
AT THE
Anniversary Meeting of the CHILDREN Edu-
cated in the CHARITY-SCHOOLS about the
Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER.

ON MAY 28, 1724.
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By the Right Reverend Father in God,
THOMAS, Lord Bishop of Sodor and Mann.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

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THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF LONDON

S E R M O N

ST. STEPHEN CHURCH

AT THE
ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE
CITY OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER



THOMAS, Lord Bishop of Exeter and London
THE SIXTH EDITION

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THE TRUE
CHRISTIAN METHOD
OF
Educating the CHILDREN
BOTH OF THE
RICH AND POOR.

ACTS xiii. 48.

—*As many as were Ordained to [that is, disposed or prepared for] eternal Life, believed.*

IN these Words of the Apostle it is plainly intimated to us, “ Ist, That there are certain Dispositions necessary to qualify Men for receiving and believing the Gospel to any saving Purposes.”

—*As many as were ordained to [or prepared for] eternal Life, believed.*

Having made this out, we shall then proceed to inquire,

IIdly, “ What these Dispositions are.”

IIIdly, “ What Manner of Education is most proper to imprint them in the Minds of those, to whom the Gospel is proposed.”

In Order,

I. In the *First* Place,—“ To prevent them from making Shipwreck of the Faith, which they have once received.”

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2. And

2. And *Secondly*,—"To oblige them to live according to the Precepts of the Gospel, which they have embraced."

But I must *first* observe to you, that this Text has been sometimes made Use of to favour an Opinion, which, if true, would render all Education, with regard to another World, entirely useless.

The Words *Ordained to eternal Life*, having been understood to mean, that such as did not believe the Gospel to saving Purposes, it was not their own Fault;—They *were Ordained not to it*, nor to that eternal Life to which a true Faith in Jesus Christ intitles his Servants;—That they were never *effectually called* to believe the Gospel, and to obey its Laws;—That Men are born to unfortunate Ends, and to the Ways that lead to them.

This has been an old Complaint and Refuge of Sinners: *The Foolishness of Man*, saith Solomon, *perverteth his Way, and his Heart fretteth against the Lord*.—As if God could take Pleasure in the Destruction or Misery of his Creatures.—An Opinion so absurd, that I should not spend one Moment of your Time in confuting it, but that it is absolutely necessary, that such as are Candidates for Eternity, as well as they that have the Care of their Education, should see the mischievous Consequence of falling into an Error, which would make God the Author of Sin;—His Commands unjust;—The Holy Scriptures inconsistent with themselves;—and render all the worthy Endeavours of *Parents*, of *Masters*, and of the *Societies* for Educating of Children, *useless*, and even *ridiculous*.

We need go no further than two Verses back, to see this Error confuted by the Apostle himself: He there tells the *Jews*, That it was necessary, that is, God had so appointed it, that the Gospel should first be preached to them; but that they, *by putting the*
Word

Word of God from them, did, by that Act, render themselves unworthy of everlasting Life.

If to this we add, the Declarations which God himself has made,—*That he would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth;—That he desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but that he should turn from his Sin, and be saved;—We shall see plainly, that it is in the Power of every Soul, by the Grace of God, to be happy; provided they put on firm Resolutions of working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; that is, with a Concern answerable to the Loss they will otherwise sustain.*

We may indeed, as many of the *Jews* did, reject the Counsel of God for our Good; but then our Destruction will be from Ourselves, and not from any Decree of God's.

The Truth is, the Word here translated *Ordained*, signifies no more than *prepared*, or *disposed* for eternal Life; and so it is translated in the Margin of our Bibles; That is, They that were well *disposed*: They that *feared* God, and were afraid for themselves: They that did not resist the Counsel and Grace of God; *these*, when the Gospel was preached to them, very readily embraced it: While *they* that lived at all Adventures, and feared no Evil, who hated Knowledge, and would not choose the Fear of the Lord, such as *these would not, could not believe*, and consequently could not be saved.

This premised, we now come to consider the great Truth intimated in the Text:

- I. “ That there are certain Dispositions necessary
“ to fit Men for receiving the Gospel to any saving
“ Purposes.”

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Thus

Thus it was prophesied of the Messiah, before he appeared in the Flesh, (*Isaiab lxi. 1.*) and foretold who would, and who would not, receive him.

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the Meek:—for they would receive his Message;—To bind up the broken-hearted;—for they would be glad of Help and Comfort;—To proclaim Liberty to the Captives, for they, and they only, who should be sensible of their Bondage, would be glad to be set at Liberty.

Accordingly, when our Lord *did* come, he invited such to be his Hearers, to whom he knew his Doctrine would be acceptable: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

And when he was reproached for conversing with Sinners, he only gave this Answer; *They that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick: I come not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.*

—Why, were not they all Sinners?

Yes.—But that which is intimated in this Answer, is this, that there are Sinners who are not at all sensible of their bad Condition: And their Condition, for that very Reason, is the more deplorable, because they would not look out for Help: While such as feared God, and were in Fear for themselves, were exceedingly pleased to hear our Lord declare, that *he came from God, to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10.

These, and these *only*, heard him with Patience; considered the Tendency of his Doctrine; examined his Miracles without Prejudice, and were at last convinced,—That *he was indeed a Teacher come from God*; That *he had the Words of eternal Life*; and that he made known Things of the greatest Concern to them.

They therefore embraced his Doctrine, and resolved to obey his Laws.

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The Apostles followed their Master in this exactly, and proposed the Gospel to such as were previously disposed to receive it.—*Whoever among you feareth God, to you is the Word of this Salvation sent,* Acts xiii. 26. And such, and such only, did receive it.

The CENTURION, amongst others, was an Instance of this, and of God's Purpose and Goodness to all such as improve that Light and Grace which he vouchsafes them.

He was a devout Man, feared God, gave much Alms, and prayed to God continually; and, being thus prepared for greater Mercies, God, by a Providence extraordinary, brought him to the Knowledge of the Gospel.

On the other Hand, we find too many of the Jews so prejudiced against Christ, and his Doctrine, that nothing could convince them, no, not Miracles themselves.

A remarkable Instance of this we have in the ivth Chapter, of this Book of the *Acts* of the Apostles.

The Apostles having cured a Man that was lame from his Mother's Womb; and this only by saying the Word, and it was done;—A sure Proof that God was with them, because this was the very Way by which He had created the Heavens and the Earth.

The Scribes and the Pharisees saw this.—*We cannot, say they, deny it;* neither could they say, that the Doctrine the Apostles preached was unworthy of God. And what was the Consequence of this?

Why, indeed, a very strange one;—*They ordered them not to speak any more in the Name of Christ,* (that very Name by which the Man had been made whole;) and threatened them severely, if they should do so.

Which History will be an eternal Testimony against those who are ever calling for more Evidence, and making Objections against received

Truths; when it is plainly their own *Obstinacy*, their *Prejudice*, or their *Wickedness*, which hinders them from perceiving the Truth;—that Truth *which is worthy of all Men to be received*; the Interest of all Men to embrace it; and which having been so clearly revealed, and abundantly confirmed, leaves all Men without Excuse, who shall reject it. For, after all, reject it Men will, if their *Minds* are not prepared to receive it.

If our Gospel, saith the Apostle, be hid, if it will not be received; it is hid to them that are lost:—Whom the God of this World has blinded, 2 Cor. iv. 3.

So that it can never be an Objection against the Christian Religion, that all Men, so soon as the Gospel is preached to them, do not see the Truth, and close with its most gracious Offers of Pardon and Happiness: For if Men are not *disposed* to be serious; if they are *engaged* in sinful Courses; if they *shun* that *Light* which would shew them to themselves: and *despise* those *Means* which God has ordained for their Conversion;—it is no Wonder they do not, nay, it is impossible they should, believe the Gospel.

And this comes to pass, not by any *fatal Decree of God*, but from an utter *Indisposition* to hearken to the Truth, and to see their Interest in it. It is occasioned also by a Custom of acting against Reason and Conscience; by leading a Life contrary to Holiness; by *grieving the Holy Spirit of God, by which they had been sanctified*; and by making it their Choice not to see the bad Consequence of a Life spent in Ignorance and Sin.

For this Reason it is, that *Children* are the most proper Subjects of an *Education* which regards *another Life*:—Before they have been suffered to grow wild; before their Souls shall have been *polluted*, their Senses *depraved*, their Minds and Memories *corrupted* by evil Principles, and evil Examples;—for, when
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it is *thus* with them, we shall find it the hardest Thing in the World, to persuade them even to *hear* what we have to say on the Part of *Religion*.

Whereas they, who have the Happiness of being restrained betimes, and trained up in the Fear of God, will *hear*, and *receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word*, which is able to *save their Souls*.

And it is for this Reason, that the great *Enemy of Souls* has, of late, been most indefatigably industrious; and has set all his Agents at work, to vilify and decry this Method of Instruction, and the CHARITY SCHOOLS; which are designed to give the Children of the Poor an early Knowledge of God, and of their Duty, before Sin and Hell have got Dominion over them.

But this should not discourage those who are engaged in that good Work; a Work, which if it had not been of God, it would have come to nought long ere this, considering the Malice of Satan, and the restless Endeavours of his Instruments, to bring an evil Report upon it; which, instead of making us uneasy, or *weary in well-doing*, will only oblige us to consider with Attention, what has, or can be objected against these SCHOOLS of PIETY; and to resolve to use our utmost Endeavours to make them effectually answer all the Ends of Charity proposed by those that *manage*, and by those that shall *contribute* towards supporting them.

Now, as we are sincere *Advocates* for this Charity, so must we be faithful *Monitors*, and always put you in Mind, that the first and great Design of those Schools, is to make Children Christians in *Deed*, as well as in *Name*; lest, not knowing, or not feeling the Power of Religion in their Souls, they fall into the Vices of the Age, and become a Scandal to their Education, and a real Grief and Offence to all that have contributed towards carrying it on.

My Meaning is this: Children may be, and often have been taught the general Truths and Duties of Christianity, without any great Good following, for Want of such previous Knowledge and Dispositions as we have been speaking of, such as are necessary to fit them for receiving the *Truth in the Love of it*.

II. "What this Knowledge, and these Dispositions are, we now come to consider."

§. I. And first.—*As the Fear of God is the Beginning of Wisdom*; "so are the Fear of God and the Knowledge of ourselves, the Foundation of saving Faith in Jesus Christ."

To you that fear God, saith the Prophet, he will arise with Healing in his Wings, Mal. iv. 2.

He may indeed be seen by others, but he comes *with Healing in his Wings* to those who only fear God.

Jesus cried—If any Man thirst let him come unto me and drink: Plainly intimating, That People must have a Sense of their Wants; they must have an Appetite, before they can so much as think of going to the *living Waters* to quench their Thirst.

Thou sayest, saith the Spirit, (Rev. iii. 17.) *That I am rich; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

A sad Condition indeed, to be miserable without knowing it, and consequently without any Inclination to look out for Help.

But then, is not this the Case of the greatest Part of Mankind? And ought not the Cure of this Malady to begin here? Especially with respect to Those, who are professedly taken in Hand to be delivered from this State of Blindness and Misery?

Should not this be our first and great Concern?

"To

“ To plant the Fear of God in their Hearts be-
times ;” namely,

By giving them a just and distinct Knowledge of
God, and his Attributes :

By making them sensible of the Relation they
bear to him ; and that they are accountable to his
Justice for every Thing they do :

By explaining to them the Condition they are
brought into, by the Fall of our first Parents :

By shewing them to themselves, and convincing
them from their own Reason and Experience, “ That
“ Things are wretchedly amiss with them.”

That they are by Nature under the Power and
Dominion of Sin ; and that, if they were left to
themselves, they would go on to obey it to their
eternal Ruin :

That People need not be at Pains to make them-
selves miserable ; for they will be so of course, if
they make no Resistance.

In short, By making them *see* and *feel* the sad
Estate they are in without the Blessing of a RE-
DEEMER, we shall lay a good Foundation for saving
Knowledge. But if that be neglected, the general
Duties of the Christian Religion may be taught
without Effect ; and they who hear them, may live
in a formal Profession of Christianity all their Days,
and die in a Condition not better than that of In-
fidels.

Do but attend to what I am going to say, and
you will be convinced, that this is the *likeliest*, if not
the *only* Way, both to convert, and to confirm them
in the Ways of Religion and Virtue ; namely,

To open their Eyes, that they may see *with whom*
they have to do ; and that they may perceive how
unworthy they are of the least of the Mercies God
designs for them ; and how liable they are to be for-
ever undone, if they are not careful for themselves.

For *First*, This is the likeliest Way to convert them;

By bringing them to a Seriousness of Temper, than which nothing is more necessary to a true Conversion.

By representing to their Minds Things of the greatest Concern to them. The *Value of their Souls*, which they ought not to hazard, though they were to get the whole World.

The Happiness they are made for, and the Misery they may bring upon themselves, if they shall oppose God's gracious Design towards them.

The Consideration of these Things often set before them, will not suffer them to be indifferent; they will learn to be afraid for themselves; and they will consider with Attention what is their true Interest, and *what they must do to be saved*. "Fear being that Passion which God makes use of to make all his other Graces effectual."

Even *Noah* himself, as great as his Faith was, stood in Need of this Passion, to make him do what God had commanded him to save himself from perishing:—*Moved with Fear*, saith the Apostle, *he prepared an Ark for the saving of his house*, Heb. ix. 7.

§. 2. Besides, it is this *Disposition* which must make them fit Objects of God's Grace and Compassion:—*To this Man will I look*, saith the Lord, *even to him that trembleth at my Word*, Isa. lxvi. 2.

§. 3. If to this we add, that it is this *Grace*, and this only, that can make Repentance and a religious Life less discouraging and burdensome, than they are apt to appear to an unregenerate Mind; we shall still see more Reason to press it upon those whom we are about to instruct unto *eternal Life*: that is,

To deny themselves a great many Things, for which they are naturally very fond;—To mortify their Lusts and Affections, which are as dear to them as their Lives;—To take up the Cross, even before

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it is laid upon them. These are Duties which corrupt Nature would avoid, if God, by putting his *Fear into their Hearts*, did not shew them the Danger, and the Necessity of doing any Thing to escape it.

And here one cannot but wonder at those who, for the most Part, forgetting this only sure Argument of *Conversion*, do hope to persuade People to forsake their Sins, and lead a religious Life, by Arguments purely moral, or on Account of worldly Inconveniencies: as,

You will ruin your *Reputation*, your *Health*, your *Estate*; you will disoblige your *Friends*.

On the other Hand, VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD: How honourable is it to be *just to one's Word*, and true in one's Dealings!—How *unworthy* a *rational Man* to live like a Beast!

One may very well question whether any Man, ever since the Fall of *Adam*, was converted by Arguments of this Nature alone. Alas! our corrupt Hearts will easily get over every Thing that can be said, which only regards *this World*.—But who can be so hardy as to slight *eternal Pain*; or to despise His *Power* and His *Displeasure*, who can *destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*; when represented in Terms suited to the Capacities of those to whom we speak, and pressed upon them with becoming Seriousness?

It is for this Reason, and because of ourselves we have so little Inclination to *consider*, as well as little Power to *choose* what is good,—That God in his holy Word, both in the Old and New Testament, has so frequently set before us the Terrors of the Lord, and of the World to come;—That he has made known to us the certain miserable Portion of the Wicked in a future State; in order to awaken us;—To fill our Hearts with Fears of future Evils, while we continue impenitent;—To make us *serious*; to make the Pleasures of the World less palatable,
—To

—To break the Power of Temptations; or, in one Word,—To dispose us for eternal Life.

Neither, *secondly*, is it of less Use to confirm them in the Ways of VIRTUE and PIETY.

For it will represent to their Minds the Dangers they have escaped; the sad Condition they had been in, had not God vouchsafed them the Grace of Repentance; which will be a Means of curing them of that Carelessness and Presumption that are the Ruin of an infinite Number of Souls.

And seeing the Circumstances of this Life, as well as the Commands of Jesus Christ, require that Christians should be always on their Guard, nothing but a great Fear of miscarrying could reconcile them to a Duty so uneasy to Flesh and Blood.

But, above all Things, this Fear will create, in young People, a Tenderness of Conscience; than which nothing will be of greater Use in the whole Course of their Lives to preserve them from falling.

Temptations may be sudden;—They may not always have Time to consider the evil Tendency of Actions; may not always know what their Duty requires of them:—But, if their Conscience is *tender* and *awake*, they will be sure to keep at the greatest Distance from every Thing they have Reason to *fear* may *offend* God; which will often serve instead of Time to consider; instead of Knowledge to direct; instead of Friends to advise with in Time of Danger.

Besides these, there is one other good Effect this *Fear* will have upon those who are early possessed of it.—“It will oblige them to live in a constant Dependence upon God.”—To be ever looking up to him for Pardon and Grace, for Light and Assistance, for Protection against their Adversaries, and against that *Security*, the Fruits of which are—Negligence,—a bold venturing upon Temptations,—a wicked Life,—and a reprobate Mind.

I will only add, That this Method of Education appears to me to be—"The very shortest Way of giving Children a thorough Knowledge of their Duty both to God and Man."

For, besides this, "That it gives God the first Possession of their Hearts," (which is, sure, no small Advantage)—It determines their Choice sometimes; makes them afraid of the Dangers that surround them; and gives them an Abhorrence of those Vices, which are so dangerous even to be acquainted with; and which one needs but once taste of, to become for ever Slaves to them.

But then, if we consider the Age, and the slow Capacities of those we have to deal with;—The many Precepts of the Gospel;—And the different Circumstances of Life, wherein they are to be applied; we should utterly despair of giving them a full Sight and Knowledge of their Duty, had not God directed us to this *short Method*:—To teach them first of all to *fear him*;—which will supply the Want of a great deal of *Learning*; a good *Memory*, and a great deal of *Time*,—which every Body cannot be Master of.

So that Natural Conscience, the general Rules of Religion, as they are summed up in our Catechism, and which every Body may learn; These, assisted by the *Fear of God*, will be sufficient to direct any Christian, in any State of Life, in which the Providence of God shall place him.

And indeed, as it is but too sure—that very many make a Shift, with good *Parts*, and a great deal of *Learning*, to be eternally ruined; so, to the Praise of God be it said, we often see many poor People, with very small Attainments, but who have been bred up in the *Fear of God*,—As true Lovers of God;—as careful not to offend him;—as constant and devout in worshipping him!—as just and conscientious in their Dealings with Men;—and as
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sober and temperate in their Lives; and, consequently, have as good a Title to the Blessings of Paradise, and the Kingdom of Heaven, as they that have had the greatest Advantages of Learning and Education.

In short, “*This FOUNDATION being once well laid,*” all other Christian Graces and Virtues will follow of course.

We shall *love* God proportionably to the *Mercies* we are sensible we have received from him, and the *Dangers* from which he has delivered us; we shall hope for all favourable Allowances from Him, whom we know we *fear* and *love*:

We shall honour him, and every Thing that relates to him; and we shall serve him truly all our Days:

And being convinced, That God has made the *Love of our Neighbour* a Proof of our Fear and Love of him, we shall always be afraid of doing any of those Things to others, which he hates, and has forbidden.

Lastly, Knowing that our Bodies are the Temples of the living God, we shall endeavour to keep them holy and undefiled, as the Temples of God should be; and shall always be afraid of profaning and polluting them, and of doing any of those vile Things which may drive the Spirit of God from his Temple, and leave it to be possessed by Devils.

But I must not tire your Patience; and therefore I proceed, in the *last* Place, to consider,

III. “What Manner of Education is most proper to imprint the Fear of God in the Hearts of those whom we undertake to instruct; In order, to prevent them, if possible, from making Shipwreck of the Faith which they have once received; and to oblige them to live according to the Precepts of the Gospel which they have embraced.”

There

There is indeed one Truth, which, if it could be believed, could make People more desirous to learn their Duty, than any Body could be to teach them, —and that is,

“ That a VIRTUOUS EDUCATION is really preferable to all the Wealth and other Advantages of the World without it.”

But, so far as this will very hardly be received, we must take another *Method*, and endeavour to possess Peoples Hearts with the *Fear of God*, and a *Fear for themselves*, in order to prevail with them to lead a Godly and a Christian Life.

We must, for Instance, set before them the *Power* and *Majesty* of that God with whom they have to do; —That all his *Laws* are *holy, just, and good*; —That therefore he expects Obedience to them; —That he *sees* all their Actions, *hears* all their Words, and *knows* the very Thoughts of their Hearts; —That though he is infinitely *good* and *merciful*, yet that he can be *angry* with Sinners, and severely too; as is plain from the many Judgments recorded in Scripture for our Example; and, that he will call all Men to an Account for the Talents he has given them. That not only wicked, but unprofitable Servants, will then be punished. That therefore, *it is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God*. —And that God has made *these Truths* known to them, on purpose that they may not ruin themselves eternally.

Let them therefore be taught to live always as in the Presence of God; as the most effectual Way to preserve in their Hearts a Sense of their Dependence upon him. —*Walk before me, and be thou perfect*; is a Rule given by God himself; —It is a Rule that the most *Ignorant* will be able to apply in all the Circumstances of Life; and the most *Learned* cannot have a better.

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You are ever *in the Presence of God*;—He is *present* therefore to punish you, if you break his Laws; He is *present* to reward you, if you do your best to please him; He is *present* to assist you when you want Help: He is *present* to defend you against all your Adversaries:—So that LIFE and DEATH are *set before you*.

They are then to be made acquainted with their own Condition;—what they are by Nature;—what they would be, if left intirely to themselves;—what they may hope for, by giving themselves up to God;—and what will certainly be the Consequence of their living *without God in the World*.

“*That they are by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath;*” is what they often hear, and often repeat: But then they should know—That *to be born in Sin*, is to come into the World a Creature in whom God can take no Pleasure:

A *Creature*, in which are the Seeds of all Manner of Wickedness, ready to spring up, and bring him to Destruction both of Soul and Body:

A *Creature* not able to help himself out of this sad Estate:

And that yet he must be delivered out of this Estate before he leaves this World, or he will remain under the Power of everlasting DEATH, and everlasting MISERY.

And they ought to know further,—That they are not only *born in Sin*, but by conversing with others as corrupt as themselves, they will become still more wicked the longer they live, and more offensive to God, if not restrained by his Grace.

It will be easy to convince them of this, by obliging them to consider those many People over whom Sin and Satan have got the Dominion;—How they are Slaves to the most unreasonable Passions;—*who having sold themselves to work wickedness, they are at last come to that pass, that they cannot cease*
from

from Sin : So that neither the Fear of *temporal* nor *eternal Punishments* can restrain them.

Then let them see the Folly of that most common Delusion ; That it is *impossible* they should ever fall into the *abominable Sins* they see, and every Day hear others guilty of.—A Delusion that has been the Ruin of an infinite Number of Souls.

Let them know therefore, that nobody ever was extremely graceless and wicked all at once ;—That one Sin makes Way for, and brings on another ;—That every one who lives in any known Sin, is advancing to a State of Atheism, of wishing *that there were no God*, and at last of *living* as if there were none ;—That they are of the very same Race and Make with those very People, whose Wickednesses they are astonished at ; and that the same evil Spirit that tempted them to those Abominations, is ever *walking about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may be permitted to devour*.

Lastly, Let this Truth be often inculcated, “ That we are not so much Masters of ourselves as we are apt to imagine.”

Governed we must be, either by the Spirit of God, or by an evil Spirit.—And that whenever Men *grieve the Holy Spirit*, and *provoke him* to withdraw his Protection, that Moment Satan takes them under his Power, and as the Scriptures speak, *Leads them captive at his Will*.

These Considerations, if any thing, will make *young People* afraid for themselves, especially if they are often put in Mind, that a very few Years will determine their Fate for ever, and they will be *happy or miserable* to all *Eternity*.

But will not this Way of Dealing with Children make them *melancholy* ?

By no Means.—It may make them *serious*, and that they ought to be ; and they ought to be so sometimes, lest they never be so—as long as they live.

That

That which makes People melancholy, is,—when they have wrong Apprehensions of God; as if he had *ordained* them for *Misery*; or when they are shewn *the Danger* they are in, without the *Way* to escape.

This indeed would be a ready Way to drive them to Despair.

But when at the same Time that they see the *bad Estate* they are in by Nature, they are made to understand the gracious *Goodness* of God in the Manner of their Redemption;—How he sent his only Son to take our Nature upon him, in order to deliver us from this State of Sin and Misery;

That he is *in him reconciling the World unto himself*;—That for his Sake he will overlook the *Untowardness* of our *Nature*;—Restore us to his Favour;—Give us all the Aids necessary to do what he requires of us; and that if we continue to serve him faithfully all our Days, he will make us happy for ever;—There will then be no Reason for *Melancholy*, much less for *Despair*.

But on the contrary: They that are thus instructed, will easily perceive the *Reasonableness* and the *Necessity* of all the Duties which Christianity requires of them, and will readily close with them, whenever they are proposed to them.

They will see, for Instance, and be sensibly affected with, the Love and Kindness of God in touching their Hearts with a Sense of the Danger they were in; which must needs be very great, since “none but the Son of God could deliver them.”

They will highly value the Favour of their Deliverance, as they will have Reason to do; and this will very naturally lead them *to love the Lord their God with all their Heart*; and to do what they believe will please him, though it should be contrary to their own Inclinations.

When they shall be convinced, as they ought to be, that God requires Obedience to his Laws, for
this

this Reason only, that we may not be *miserable*, they will avoid every Sin he has forbidden, not because it is *scandalous*, or *punishable* by Man, but because it will *displease* God; and because it will utterly unfit them for Heaven and Happiness.

When once they have been made sensible, what little Power they had to deliver themselves out of that sad Estate in which Sin had involved them, they will see it highly reasonable to give all the Glory of their Deliverance to God; and to cast themselves intirely upon him for Grace and Strength to carry them through all future Difficulties and Dangers.

And this will very naturally lead them to *pray* to him continually, to deliver them—from a *corrupt World*, *infinite Errors*, and most *powerful Enemies*, which they are sure to meet with in their Way to Heaven.

If they have been made truly sensible of the *Corruption*, the *Weakness*, and the *Inconstancy* of their *Nature*, and that Satan is ever ready to tempt them to their Ruin, they will see and acknowledge the Reasonableness, and the absolute Necessity of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, of watching and walking warily all their Days.

Whenever they are in *Danger* of *transgressing*, they will be put in Mind of the sad Condition of *that Man* in the Gospel, whom our Lord has mentioned for our Warning, to whom an *Evil Spirit*, after he had been turned out, returned with *seven other Spirits more wicked than himself*; so that the *last Estate* of that *Man* was *worse than the first*.

And having been often told, as they should be, that whenever *the Spirit of God* forsakes them, an *Evil Spirit* will take the Government of them; and that every wilful Sin sets them further out of God's Favour, and gives the Devil still more Power over them:—Whenever they shall have done amiss, they will immediately *ask Pardon*, that they may not put themselves out of God's Protection.

In one word, they will not look upon Christianity as a State of *Idleness*; but consider it, as indeed

deed it is, a State of *Trial*, in which they are placed for a very short while, in order to be restored to the *Image of God*, in which they were at first created; and that if they lose this Opportunity, they may be for ever undone.

And when they see so many about them in the very Way of *Perdition*, they will bless God for the happy Providence, and for all those whom he has made Instruments of their Conversion,—Before *evil Habits* were become a second Nature,—Before *evil Conversation* had corrupted their *Manners*, or *evil Company* their *Principles*.

§ 4. And it is much to be wished, that they, who stand charged with the *Education* of those of better *Circumstances*, would seriously consider, whether it is not for want of laying this *Foundation*, for want of possessing their Souls betimes with the *Fear of God*, and with a Concern for their everlasting Welfare, that that *Learning*, and other *Accomplishments*, which are intended to qualify them for passing through the World with Reputation and Advantage, do only prove a greater *Snare* to them.

For it is too plain to be denied, and much to be lamented, that very many of those whom God has distinguished by *Honours*, liberal *Education* and great *Estates*, are extremely corrupted by these Advantages.—They are often too *learned* to be instructed by their proper Teachers; Too *great* to be reprov'd when they are in an Error;—Too *high* to submit to the Laws of the Gospel;—or too much *taken up* with the Affairs of this World, to be seriously concerned for that which is to come.

And all this for want of being first instructed in the *Fear of God*; and the Dangers they are exposed to, if they should be so unhappy as to follow their own Inclinations:

For want of being humbled with the Knowledge of the Majesty of God, *who putteth down one, and setteth up another*: For

For want of knowing the Dangers and the Temptations of an high Estate :

For want of being convinced, that *they* are as much subject to the Laws of Christ, and as liable to be eternally ruined, if they are not so, as the *meanest* on Earth :

For want of being often told,—“ That the more they have, the more they are to answer for :”

And lastly,—For want of being made sensible of the vile *Ingratitude* of living only to dishonour their great Benefactor.

We are obliged to say it again ; It is the Want of this Kind of *Instruction*, that is the *Source* of that Corruption which spreads itself so universally ;—While a *superficial* Knowledge of the Christian Religion, of the Commands of God, and of the Way of worshipping him, is called a *Christian Education*.

And therefore it much concerns All, to see that their Children be taught in the first Place to *fear God* ; to *know*, and to be *afraid* for themselves, and of his *Judgments*.

And then we might hope to see a Number of young People, *sober* and *serious* in their Behaviour ;—And when grown up, *peaceable* in their Lives, *upright* in their Dealings ; *obedient* to their Governors ; and *Examples of Piety* to all about them.

For indeed, “ It is true Religion that must support the State ;” not only as it is a Means of averting God’s Judgments, but as it is the most effectual Means of keeping Men within the Bounds of Duty and Obedience ; “ The Fear of God being the only sure Principle of Loyalty to be depended on.”

The *Fear of Death* itself being but a poor Restraint, in Comparison of the *Dread of God’s Displeasure*, when once the Heart is possessed with a just Sense of it.

And if ever we shall be so happy as to have the Generality of our Youth thus *educated*, the Civil Government will soon find its Interest in it.

They

They that shall be taught to *fear God*, will as surely honour the King, and them that are put in Authority under him.

Men will obey them that have the Rule over them, not only for *Wrath*—for fear of temporal Punishment,—but for *Conscience Sake*,—for fear of offending God.

The *Sacredness of Oaths* will be more regarded.—And Christians will *study to be quiet*, and to do their own *Business*, and leave the Government of the World to those on whom the Providence of God has laid that Burden.

And though the Corruption of human Nature will always make Laws, and Civil Penalties, and Magistrates to put them in Execution, and to decree Justice, necessary; yet this Burden will become every Day lighter;—

When the Number of *untaught and undisciplined* People shall be lessened;—When Subjects shall become *peaceable*, because of the Oath of God which is upon them;—When Men shall make it their Choice to be just one to another, knowing the Account they must one Day give;—and, being convinced, that this is not the World they were made for, when they shall be afraid of losing the eternal Happiness of the next, by being too passionately fond of this.

In short.—There is no governing the *outward*, without first governing the *inward* Man;—*Out of the Heart*, saith our Saviour, proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemies, &c. Matt. xv. 19.

Now where the *Fear of God* is, there is no Room for any of these to enter; and this is the Reason that I have with so much Earnestness, and, I am afraid, Tedioufness, recommended a *Method of Education*, which, if religiously pursued, would in all Probability promote these great Ends;—The *Glory of God*—The *Good of Mankind*—The *Happiness of this Life*—And the *Blessings of the World to come*.

Amen



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